

# **Hart County Water and Sewer Authority Board of Directors Meeting March 16, 2026**

The Hart County Water and Sewer Authority met on March 16, 2026, in the Hart County Cooperative Extension Service Building. Chairman Wade Carlton called the meeting to order. Present were Board Members Patti York, Larry Haley, Marvin Justice and Bennie Harper. Also present were Legal Counsel Kim Higginbotham, Director Pat Goran, Office Manager Karen Neal, Hartwell Sun Editor Rose Scoggins and many local residents.

## **Welcome**

## **Approval of Agenda**

Ms. Higginbotham suggested the agenda be amended to include personnel under Executive Session. Mr. Haley made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Harper seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Approval of February 16, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Ms. York made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2026 Board meeting. Mr. Harper seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Public Comments**

Scott Howard, representing the Milltown Road area including Wicker Road, Foxtrot Road and Rabbit Run, stated he had spoken with some neighbors and they fully support being added to the Reed Creek Highway expansion project.

Tom Olive requested the Authority pay to move a fire hydrant on a property he purchased on Reed Creek Highway in September 2025. Mr. Carlton, Ms. York and Ms. Higginbotham asked Mr. Olive a few questions. The Board noted they would take Mr. Olive's comments under advisement.

Nancy Ferenchak of Raindrop Circle asked for an update on the Reed Creek Highway expansion into her neighborhood in terms of timing and what easements may be needed.

Gary Blasingame of the Moreland Heights area stated his neighborhood's desire to have that area added to the Reed Creek Highway expansion project.

## **Financial Report**

Mr. Goran stated there was no change in the SPLOST funds. He pointed out that HCWSA funds are volatile during the Reed Creek Highway expansion construction and would continue to be so until the project is complete. Mr. Goran stated that flushing usage has remained low due to the

continued cool weather. Mr. Goran shared the Authority has purchased more water from the City of Lavonia and less from the City of Hartwell lately. Mr. Goran answered a few questions on the detailed financial report.

## **Old Business**

### **University of Georgia Archway study for constructing new surface water treatment plant**

Mr. Goran shared EMI's estimate to build a treatment plant and noted it would be a significant investment. A brief discussion was held, and Mr. Goran expects the Board to have a finalized plan offered by the students in May.

### **Reed Creek area expansion project update**

Mr. Goran stated construction has nearly reached the intersection of the old L&J store. Discussion then turned to which roads had requested to be added to this project. Mr. Carlton stated he was less interested in providing water to temporary housing like campgrounds and more interested in densely packed neighborhoods to the north and east of Hatton Ford over to the Hidden Point area.

Local resident Guy Hagan again lobbied for the Sentu Way neighborhood to be added to the project. Mr. Hagan pointed out that Sentu Way is just a short distance from the planned stopping point on Old Andersonville Road.

Mr. Justice inquired if the number of homes per estimate is information the Authority could obtain. Mr. Carlton asked if the Tax Assessor's office could assist. Ms. Neal will reach out to Shane Hix and email the Board, Mr. Goran and Ms. Higginbotham when that information becomes available.

Ms. Higginbotham discussed the potential need for easements on Dewdrop Circle but noted she is still researching the subject. She is hopeful someone can put her in touch with the estate of the man who technically owns the road. Ms. Higginbotham asked Mr. Goran how long it would take to complete the current scope of the project.

### **Consideration of partnering with City of Lavonia – surface water treatment plant**

Mr. Goran briefed the Board on his recent conversation with Robert Ogburn and stated Lavonia knows HCWSA's desire to create a long-lasting partnership remains strong. Mr. Carlton asked how the Authority could get more Lavonia water to Hartwell Energy. Mr. Goran replied there is a pressure-reducing valve located near the intersection of Liberty Hill and Liberty Hill Church Roads that could be adjusted to accomplish that goal.

## **Discussion of Authority's wholesale water purchase arrangement with Hartwell**

Ms. York stated the only response to her email requesting HCWSA be added to the City of Hartwell's April agenda was from Kay Ankerich. Discussion was held as to the next Hartwell City Council meeting date and whether the Authority would be added to the agenda for April 6, 2026, as requested.

## **New Business**

### **Election of Authority Officers**

For the election of Chairman of the Board, Mr. Haley nominated Mr. Carlton. Ms. York seconded that motion. The motion passed 4-0 with Mr. Carlton abstaining. Mr. Harper requested nominations be closed. That motion passed 5-0.

For the election of Vice Chairman of the Board, Mr. Justice nominated Ms. York. Mr. Harper seconded that motion. The motion passed 4-0 with Ms. York abstaining. Mr. Harper requested nominations be closed. That motion passed 5-0.

For the election of the Secretary/Treasurer, Mr. Haley nominated Ms. Neal. Mr. Carlton seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0. Mr. Harper requested nominations be closed. That motion passed 5-0.

### **Director's Comments**

Mr. Goran noted he would be taking a few days' vacation leaving around noon on Tuesday. He also congratulated Ms. York, Mr. Justice and Mr. Harper on being reappointed to the Authority Board.

Mr. Goran pointed out that the Board of Commissioners would be holding a class on the Open Meeting/Open Records requirements this week. Ms. Higginbotham recommended everyone attend.

Mr. Goran also brought up the Memorandum of Understanding signed nearly thirty years ago regarding the fire pump and tank within the Hartwell city limits at the Hartwell Business Center off Highway 172. While that tank and pump is connected to the City of Hartwell water system, the Authority is responsible for maintenance. Mr. Goran discussed potential maintenance that may be required in the near future and whether this is an agreement the Authority needs to revisit given the Authority gets no revenue from it.

### **Members' Comments**

Ms. York and Mr. Harper had no comment. Mr. Haley recommended the Board consider raising the cost of tap fees. Mr. Goran stated HCWSA fees are in line with other agencies in the northeast Georgia area, but Mr. Haley requested Mr. Goran perform additional research on the subject.



## **Upcoming Meetings**

Mr. Carlton asked if anyone had any conflicts on April 20<sup>th</sup>. There were no objections.

## **Executive Session**

Mr. Harper moved to exit the Regular Meeting and enter Executive Session to discuss personnel and potential litigation. Mr. Haley provided a second. The motion carried 5-0. All five Board Members were present in Executive Session plus Ms. Neal and Mr. Goran. Mr. Harper moved to exit Executive Session and reconvene the Regular Meeting. Mr. Haley provided a second. The motion carried 5-0.

## **Regular Meeting**

Ms. York made a motion to rescind Mr. Goran's offer to Mr. Olive. Mr. Harper seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-2 with Mr. Justice and Mr. Haley voting against.

## **Adjournment**

Mr. Haley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Justice seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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Wade Carlton, Chairman

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